

Powerful Ideas Trump Good Ideas

I used to believe in the marketplace of ideas. That in a free society, ideas compete and the most accurate one wins. I don't believe this anymore, or maybe it is more accurate to say that I do believe that the best idea wins, but not the most accurate.

There are certain economic, political and scientific ideas that gain momentum and popularity due to inertia gained from benefiting powerful people. These ideas don't explain reality well, but they benefit the people who desire to have experts say what they are saying. The powerful people give money and prestige to experts who say what benefits them, then the whole industry gets corrupted by the money. This can happen without one person being dishonest or corrupt, but rather just because the funding and prestige is directed at the people with bad ideas.

The best ideas win, but not to the ends of truth, rather to the ends of benefiting powerful people. This is another reason why governments should remain small (or non-existent) and culture should be decentralized. When too much power is centralized in one place, it corrupts everything around it.